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Senior Health and Wellness Newsletter

Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living



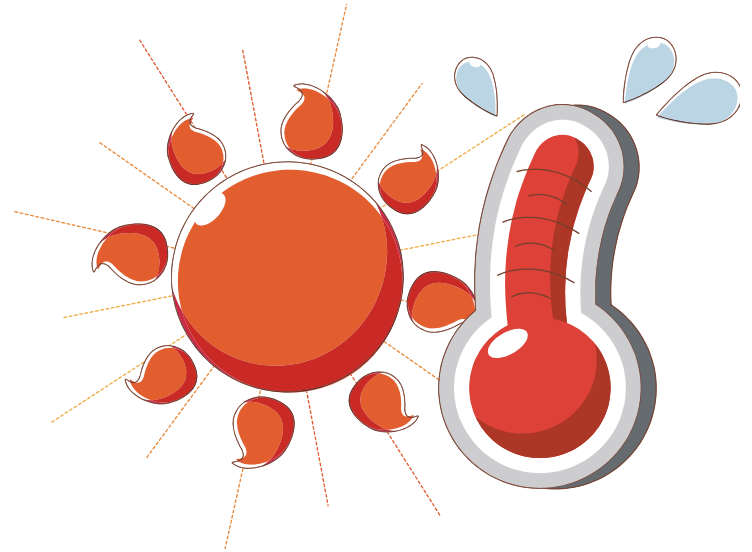
Be Safe in the Heat

According to the National Weather Service, heat is the number one weather related killer in the United States. Heat illness can occur when you get too hot to fast or when you loose too much fluid or salt through dehydration and sweating. When this happens your body temperature rises and you get sick from the heat. Very high body temperatures may damage the brain or other vital organs.

Our risk of getting sick from the heat increases with age. Conditions that cause heat cramps in a 17-year-old may result in heat exhaustion in someone 40 years old, and heat stroke in a person over 60. Obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, mental illness, poor circulation, sunburn, prescription drugs, and alcohol also increase your risk of heat illness.

You can take these steps to prevent heat-related illnesses during hot weather:

- Use air conditioners or spend time in air-conditioned locations. Call your local health department to ask about heat shelters in your area if needed.
 - Use fans to move hot air from rooms or draw in cooler air. Don't point fans toward your when room temperature is hotter than 90°F.
 - Take a cool bath or shower.
 - Minimize direct exposure to the sun.
 - Drink plenty of water or other nonalcoholic fluids. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink.
- Warning:** If your doctor limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask how much you should drink while the weather is hot.
- Eat light, easy-to-digest foods such as fruit or salads.
 - Wear loose fitting and light-colored clothes.
 - Schedule outdoor activities carefully. Limit outdoor activities to morning and evenings.
 - Check on a friend or neighbor and have someone do the same for you.
 - Check the local news for health and safety updates.
 - Know the symptoms of excessive heat exposure and what to do.



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers this list of possible warning signs:

- Sweating heavily or appearing pale.
- Muscle cramps, headache, vomiting or nausea.
- Headache, dizziness, weakness, fatigue or fainting.
- Moist skin that's quite cool to the touch.
- A weak and fast pulse, or fast and shallow breathing.



If you see any of these signs, you may be dealing with a life-threatening emergency. Have someone **call 911** for immediate medical assistance while you do the following:

- Get the victim to a shady area.
- Cool the victim rapidly, using whatever methods you can. For example, immerse the victim in a tub of cool water; place the person in a cool shower; spray the victim with cool water from a garden hose; sponge the person with cool water; or if the humidity is low, wrap the victim in a cool, wet sheet and fan him or her vigorously.

For More Information:

Extreme Heat: A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety—
http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.asp

National Weather Service—<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/heat/index.shtml>

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